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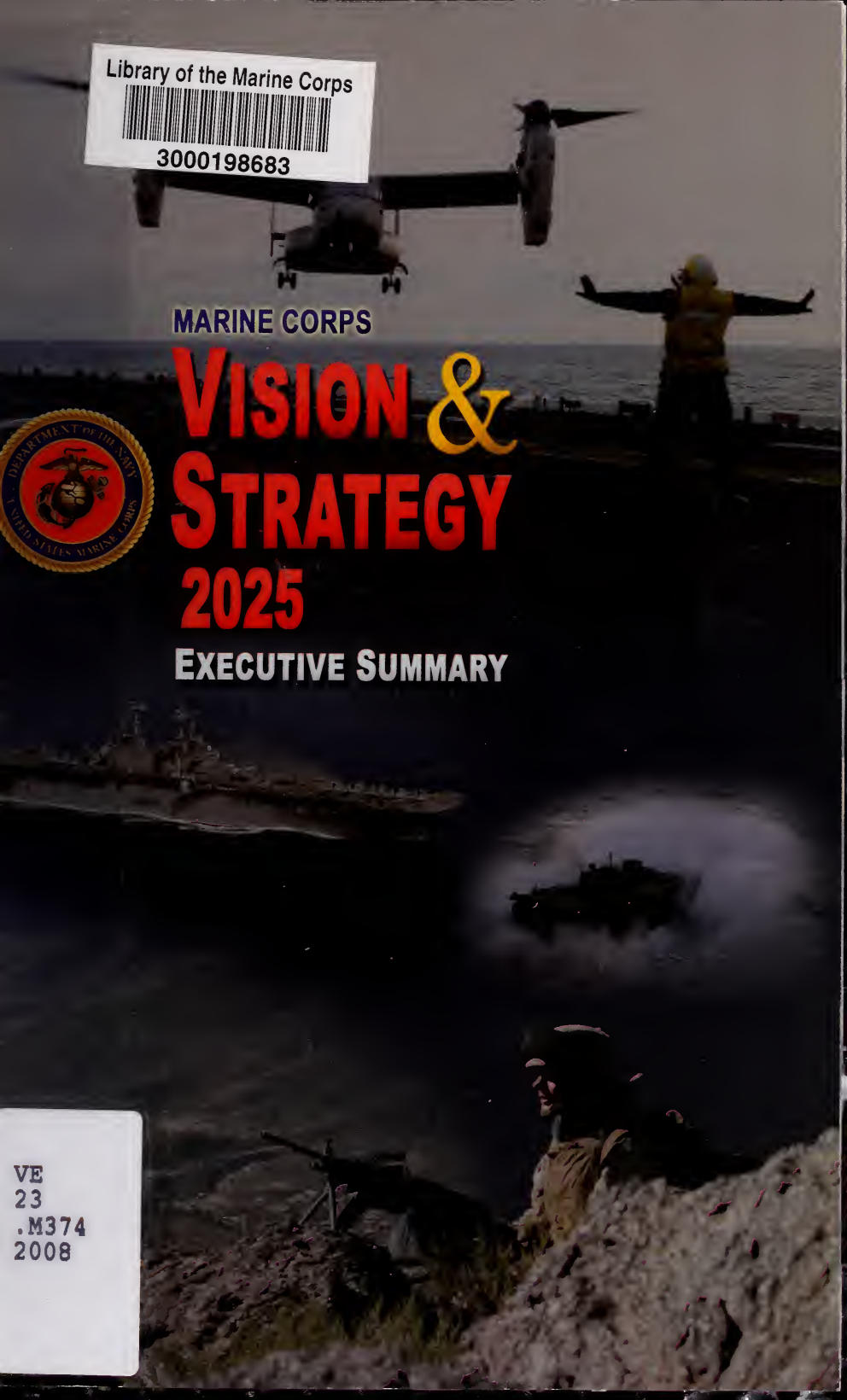

MARINE CORPS

VISION & STRATEGY 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Background

The Commandant established a Strategic Vision Group (SVG) in June of 2007. The group was created in order to aid General Conway to posture the Marine Corps for the future. With a small dedicated cell, and connecting files to our current and past leadership and the operating forces, the group has been working now for a year to fulfill its charter.

The SVG was charged to assess the emerging and future security environment facing the United States and potential adversaries. The initial mark given for future environments was 2025. After assessing the range of potential futures and the changing character of conflict, the SVG was tasked with determining the implications to national security and proposing steps to ensure the Marine Corps' continued readiness.

The SVG assessment was informed by a number of studies such as the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, National Intelligence Council assessments, the U. S. Joint Forces Command's Joint Operational Environment, and the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity mid- and long-range threat estimates. The SVG also reached out to U.S. and allied studies, fostered relationships with similar cells in sister Services, and consulted with business and academic experts to define the strategic and operational environment that the Marine Corps will find itself in tomorrow. The synthesis of these assessments and the future force implications led to the development of an updated Marine Corps Vision and Strategy publication. This document is excerpted below. It provides a comprehensive, actionable, and compelling narrative that ensures the Marine Corps' continued service as the Nation's "force in readiness." A full version can be found in the publications section at *www.marines.mil* along with additional information on the SVG home page, listed under the MCBQ Activities tab at *www.quantico.usmc.mil*.

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Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025 Executive Summary

Table of Contents

Section ..... *Page*

Foreword 1

Purpose and Role in the Future Security Environment . . 3

Marine Corps Values, Principles, and Competencies . . 5

Marine Corps Vision 2025 10

Strategy Statement and Objectives for 2025 15

Conclusion 25

Foreword

Our Nation faces challenges that are global in reach and scope. While today's Marines are performing superbly in every clime and place, our institution must also devote attention to tomorrow's threats and opportunities.

It is our obligation to subsequent generations of Marines, and to our Nation, to always have an eye to the future — to prepare for tomorrow's challenges today. This Vision and Strategy document confirms who we are, what we believe, and what we do. It establishes the foundation for our operational concepts and identifies the critical steps needed to shape our Corps for an increasingly volatile and uncertain future. It is grounded firmly in our legislated role as the Nation's "force in readiness," and it will guide our Service so that we are properly organized, trained, equipped, and prepared for tomorrow's challenges.

With little warning, our Nation calls its Corps of Marines front and center during its most challenging times. Responding rapidly to crisis and strategic surprise is an integral part of our history as a Corps. In the South Pacific after Pearl Harbor, in Korea after the communist invasion in 1950, in the jungle outposts of Viet Nam, in the deserts of Southwest Asia, and in the mountains of Afghanistan — Marines have distinguished themselves as an expeditionary, multicapable force able to respond and win battles for our Nation.

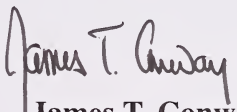
We have been prepared in the past because we understood that a force in readiness must be well-trained, broadly educated, and properly equipped for employment across all forms of warfare. We believe the individual Marine is the most formidable weapon on today's battlefield and will remain so tomorrow. Whatever the future holds, our emphasis on making Marines will not change.

Expeditionary excellence requires Marines who are morally, physically, and mentally tough. Marines must be agile, capable of transitioning seamlessly between fighting, training, advising, and assisting — or performing all of these tasks simultaneously.

Though our Corps has recently proven itself in "sustained operations ashore," future operational environments will place a premium on agile expeditionary forces, able to act with unprecedented speed and versatility in austere conditions against a wide range of adversaries. We must be a two fisted fighter — able to destroy enemy formations with our scalable air-ground-logistics teams in major contingencies, but equally able to employ our hard earned irregular warfare skills honed over decades of conflict. Our Corps must serve credibly as a persistently engaged and multicapable force, able to draw upon contributions from our Total Force, in order to address the full range of contingencies the future will undoubtedly present. In short, we must be prepared to move with speed, "live hard," and accomplish any mission.

This document details my vision of the future Corps and a plan for creating the Marine Corps of 2025. The future Marine Corps will fulfill its unique role and extend its legacy as the world's premier expeditionary fighting force. To enhance its operational utility to combatant commanders, the Corps will be preventative in approach, leaner in equipment, versatile in capabilities, innovative in mindset, and increasingly reliant on naval deployment.

Marines are a breed apart — born of epic battles and tempered in the ultimate crucible of combat. We will carry our rich legacy forward and continue to honorably serve our Nation. The Marine Corps is committed to providing the Nation its expeditionary "Force of Choice" for tomorrow's challenges.



James T. Conway
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

Purpose and Role in the Future Security Environment

Purpose

The purpose of the vision and strategy document is to inform all Marines where we intend to take our Corps, to give combatant commanders a concept of how we might best be employed, and to provide our civilian leadership a reference point as to how we see Marine Corps contributions to national defense in the coming years and decades. This document is grounded in the Marine Corps' identity, ethos, values, and competencies. It serves as the principal strategic planning document for our Corps and reflects our legislated roles, functions, and composition. Derived from strategic guidance at the national and departmental level, it illustrates our utility and value within the joint warfighting community.

The vision section describes a Marine Corps adapting to fulfill our role in the Nation's defense in an inherently unpredictable future. It is founded on our enduring characteristics and capabilities, but also reflects shifts in posture and practice designed to enhance today's Corps for tomorrow's challenges. The strategy section lays out a strategy statement as well as a set of institutional objectives to realize the vision and meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Our Service capstone concept and supporting operating concepts will flow from the vision and strategy, as will the more detailed plans of the deputy commandants and subordinate commanders. The development of these plans will be directed by the Implementation Planning Guidance which will be published in subsequent documents. Together these documents will provide an actionable plan to ensure the Corps preserves its fundamental ethos, adaptability, and relevance to the combatant commanders' requirements today, while shaping itself to meet tomorrow's security challenges.

Role in the Future Security Environment

As we prepare for an unpredictable future, we must continue to adapt to the ever-changing character and conduct of warfare, while remaining cognizant of its fundamentally unchanging nature. What Congress described as "fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components" – known today as Marine air – ground task forces (MAGTFs) – provides the primary means through which we engage with partners, assist victims, or strike with determination against our foes. Our future remains true to the idea that a Corps of Marines – who are well-trained, equipped, and educated in the art and science of war – can leverage the great advantages of seapower through rapid and decisive action in and around the littorals.

> ***"The first feature we can predict with confidence is that there is going to be a blurring, a further blurring, of warfare categories."***
>
> ***Colin S. Gray, Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare***

Our Nation's global interests, the international community's need for stability, and the range of missions that must be fulfilled demand a discriminating, multicapable force. This force must be highly trained and educated to function in both current and emerging operational environments against evolving foes. The Nation requires very capable forces, covering the greatest range of tasks, at an affordable cost that can minimize the risks inherent in an unforeseeable future. Truly expeditionary forces must have the ability to engage rapidly and in all conditions against enemies that adapt weapons or tactics to fight us asymmetrically. For the Corps, we must continue to prepare for the challenges that loom on the horizon. We are by law, and will continue to be, the Nation's force in readiness – "most ready when the Nation is least ready."

Marine Corps Values, Principles, and Competencies

This chapter describes our values, principles, and competencies. They capture ***who we are, what we believe, and what we do***.

a. <u>Core Values</u>. Our values reflect those of the American people and define ***who we are***. We are men and women who hold true to our Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. They are our touchstones in times of peril and adversity. They guide the actions of every individual who has earned the title ... "***Marine.***"

b. <u>Enduring Principles</u>. Principles define fundamental beliefs that form the foundation from which Marines derive their ethos and basic operating instincts. The following principles help to further define the cultural identity of Marines in the most basic terms - they express ***what we believe***:

Every Marine a Rifleman. *Every Marine — regardless of military occupational specialty — is first and foremost a disciplined warrior.*

Expeditionary Naval Force. *Marines are "soldiers of the sea," an integral part of the naval Services — lean, versatile, flexible, and ready. We are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct naval campaigns and operate on and from naval platforms, or to fight in protracted campaigns ashore.*

Combined Arms Organization. *In 1952, Congress directed the Marine Corps' composition as an air-ground combined arms force. This integrated force, known as the MAGTF, has unique and incomparable warfighting capabilities. Our MAGTF contains organic air, ground, and logistics elements under a single command element, making it an effective and integrated combined arms force.*

Ready and Forward Deployed. *Congress' intent that the Marine Corps serve as the "force in readiness" was founded on a recognized national need for a force capable of rapid response to emerging crises. This requirement mandates high standards of readiness across the force. We are routinely forward deployed around the globe and stand prepared to respond quickly in times of crisis.*

Agile and Adaptable. *The Marine Corps' agility is based on its expeditionary mindset and flexible structure, able to operate either from the sea or in sustained operations ashore. We can adapt quickly with unparalleled speed across an extraordinary range of military operations. Our organizational design and training facilitate a seamless transition between these operations, providing the necessary capability to operate effectively.*

Marines Take Care of Their Own. *We are stewards of the most important resource entrusted to us — our Nation's sons and daughters. We make Marines, imbue them with our Core Values, and offer them the opportunity to serve a cause greater than themselves. Marines live up to the motto, Semper Fidelis. We are faithful to those who fall and we care for our wounded Marines and their families.*

c. <u>Core Competencies</u>. Core competencies reflect our particular skill sets and thus describe ***what we do***. They provide the basis for the level of expertise and effectiveness of Marine Corps forces. They are our fundamental contribution to our Nation's defense. Though enduring, they are not static; as necessary, new competencies must be developed and honed to meet emerging challenges.

1. The Corps conducts persistent forward naval engagement and is always prepared to respond as the Nation's force in readiness. We understand that true readiness means much more than being deployable. It requires a force that is deployed with our Navy shipmates, engaged in the littorals, and contributing to the prevention of conflict. This agile force can react rapidly across the range of military operations and must prevail, even thrive, in the uncertainty and chaos of emerging crises.

2. The Corps employs integrated combined arms across the range of military operations and can operate as part of a joint or multinational force. Marine employment and integration of air- and ground-based capabilities reflects our innovative approach to warfighting. History has shown that this approach can be applied with effect in missions that range from security cooperation to major combat operations. Our MAGTFs are task-organized for each mission and can be employed independently, or as part of a joint or multinational force.

3. The Corps provides forces and specialized detachments for service aboard naval ships, on stations, and for operations ashore. Our modernization programs for the future are being designed to allow Marine Corps forces to seamlessly deploy, project power, and fight from naval vessels or austere expeditionary bases, or any combination thereof. Our close association with the Navy continues today, along with a growing interaction with the Coast Guard.

4. The Corps conducts joint forcible entry operations from the sea and develops amphibious landing force capabilities and doctrine. When access to critical regions or allies is denied or in jeopardy, forward deployed, rapidly employable Marine Corps forces are trained and ready to execute amphibious operations to overcome enemy defenses. Together, the Navy and Marine Corps provide the Nation with its primary capability to swiftly project and sustain combat power ashore in the face of armed opposition. We leverage available joint and naval capabilities, project sustainable combat power ashore, and secure entry for follow-on forces.

"There is little that will sober an enemy more surely than the knowledge that somewhere, just over the horizon, lies a force of well-trained, well-equipped Marines in competently manned ships capable of delivering a stunning amphibious blow at a point and time of their own choosing."
Lieutenant General
Victor Krulak,
United States Marine Corps

5. The Corps conducts complex expeditionary operations in the urban littorals and other challenging environments. The Marine Corps' historical ability to conduct expeditionary operations, such as irregular warfare, against emerging threats in complex environments is well documented. These operations include counterinsurgency; counterterrorism; train, advise, and assist activities; and stability tasks. The complexity of these missions has increased due to the presence of large numbers of noncombatants, urbanization in the littorals, and the dynamics of the information environment.

6. The Corps leads joint and multinational operations and enables interagency activities. Marines are well qualified to enable the introduction of follow-on forces and facilitate the integration of military and interagency efforts. This interoperability mandates the establishment of enduring relationships and the orchestration of diverse capabilities, organizations, and cultural awareness across all aspects of an operation.

Marine Corps Vision 2025

The Marine Corps of the future will be the Nation's expeditionary force of choice. It will be —

a. Dedicated to making Marines imbued with the ideal of selfless service to the Nation. Our success as a Corps depends directly on our ability to recruit, train, and retain the best Marines possible. Young men and women will join our Corps confident in our ability to train and lead them well and employ them in ways that make a difference. Our Battle Colors have been passed to a new generation of Marines who are shouldering them with the same grit and determination as generations past. They are part of a great legacy of Marines that will someday pass our Battle Colors to yet another generation.

b. Prepared to "live hard" in uncertain, chaotic, and austere environments. Marine Corps forces must be organized, trained, equipped, and deployed with the expectation of operating in inhospitable conditions against committed and competent foes.

We will maintain an expeditionary mindset in our air and ground elements and in all we do – emphasizing speed of execution, agility, and flexibility.

c. Deployed forward with relevant and timely capabilities. Marine Corps forces will bring proven capabilities to combatant commanders to accomplish a wide range of tasks. We will —

1. Operate forward with a regional focus, yet be globally capable.

2. Execute persistent forward engagement and security cooperation activities.

3. Respond swiftly, with little warning, to emerging crises.

4. Maximize speed and freedom of action through seabasing, while minimizing footprint ashore.

5. Conduct joint forcible entry operations from the sea.

6. Engage in sustained operations ashore, as required.

d. Forged to be lean, agile, and adaptable as individuals and as an institution. We will practice a self-disciplined approach to force design and development. These efforts will strike a balance between being heavy enough to sustain expeditionary warfare and light enough to facilitate rapid deployment. We will apply lessons learned from current operations to maintain an edge against ever-adapting opponents.

e. Focused on executing sustainable expeditionary operations. We will ensure that we maintain the ability to sustain ourselves in operations through the use of either a sea base or an initial lodgment ashore. The organic sustainability of our MAGTFs is a unique and critical force enabler in such conditions, particularly early in an operation. We must remain committed to fielding sustainable forces, exploiting joint capabilities, and leveraging the advantages of seabasing.

> ***"The essence of maneuver is taking action to genrate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing our objective as effecively as possible. That advantage may be psychlogical, tecnological, or temporal as well as spatial."***
>
> ***Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, Warfighting***

f. Trained and equipped to lead joint and multinational operations and enable interagency activities. Marines take pride in being "first to fight," and historically have a record of being the first to respond to many emergencies and disasters. As first responders, we have experience integrating many organizations with different levels of capability into an effective team. In the future, Marine Corps forces may be required to remain actively engaged for longer periods alongside our joint, multinational, and interagency partners.

g. Educated and trained to understand and defeat adversaries in complex conflicts. We will go to greater lengths to understand our enemies and the range of cultural, societal, and political factors affecting all with whom we interact. Our

training and education programs will provide skills that enable civil-military and combat operations and are particularly important in complex environments. The ability to conduct both types of operations, simultaneously, is the essence of the force as a "two-fisted fighter" — capable of offering an open hand to people in need or a precise jab to an adversary in an irregular warfare environment; while at the same time, ready to wield a closed fist in the event of major combat operations.

h. Committed to taking care of Marines and their families. While the ideals of service to Corps and Country have not changed, the conditions of service are constantly changing, as are the needs and wants of Marine families. Marines have reasonable expectations regarding housing, schools, and family support, and it is incumbent upon us to support our Marines in these key areas.

Vision Statement

The Marine Corps of 2025 will fight and win our Nation's battles with multicapable MAGTFs, either from the sea or in sustained operations ashore. Our unique role as the ***Nation's force in readiness****, along with our values, enduring ethos, and core competencies, will ensure we remain highly responsive to the needs of combatant commanders in an uncertain environment and against irregular threats. Our future Corps will be increasingly reliant on naval deployment, preventative in approach, leaner in equipment, versatile in capabilities, and innovative in mindset. In an evolving and complex world,* ***we will excel as the Nation's expeditionary "force of choice."***

Strategy Statement and Objectives for 2025

The following strategy statement and prioritized objectives reflect the Marine Corps' concept to implement our Service vision.

a. <u>Strategy Statement</u>.

The Marine Corps' unique contribution to national defense is its ***role*** as the ***Nation's force in readiness***, able to respond rapidly and decisively to crises anywhere in the world. The Corps will continue to fulfill that role — while improving its combat capability to prevail against emerging threats in complex environments.

The Corps will be —

1. Organized to execute operations with lethal and lean MAGTFs that are mission tailored and able to operate as part of a naval and joint team.

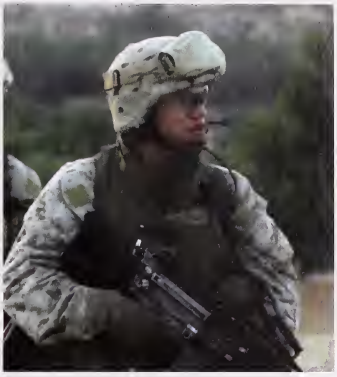
2. Optimized to conduct naval expeditionary operations while retaining the institutional agility, battlefield flexibility, and initiative to meet constantly changing conditions of war.

3. Modernized with equipment and logistics that expand expeditionary capability and preserve our ability to operate from the sea.

4. Postured to prevent or respond to crises with forward positioned MAGTFs — both afloat and ashore — that are engaged and ready to act decisively in response to combatant commanders' requirements.

These methods will be employed in order to provide the Nation unmatched strategic freedom of maneuver and operational flexibility throughout the 21st century.

b. Objectives. The Marine Corps will achieve the following objectives:



1. Focus on the Individual Marine. The individual Marine will remain our most important warfighting asset. The recruitment, training, professional education, and retention of high-quality, disciplined warriors imbued with our core values is paramount to our mission. We will continue to exploit technology to enhance the performance of the individual warrior. Marines at all levels must be prepared to excel in ambiguous and dangerous conditions, operate from a commander's intent, and with minimal direct supervision.

2. Improve Training and Education for Fog, Friction, and Uncertainty. Our realistic training and education system will prepare Marines for complex conditions and to counter the unexpected. It will provide small unit leaders the tactical acumen and knowledge to develop and assess these conditions in order to make sound decisions, and the proficiency to employ supporting intelligence, fires, and information resources. Our noncommissioned and junior officers will be prepared for greater responsibility in an increasingly complex environment while potentially operating in a decentralized manner.

3. Expand Persistent Forward Presence and Engagement. The Marine Corps will develop a plan to provide a tailored, persistently engaged, contingency-capable MAGTF in five prioritized regions:

a) East and Southeast Asia Littorals (US Pacific Command).

b) Red Sea, Arabian Gulf and Arabian Sea Littorals (US Central Command [USCENTCOM]).

c) East and West Africa Littorals (USCENTCOM, US Africa Command [USAFRICOM]).

d) Latin America and the Caribbean Basin (US Southern Command).

e) Mediterranean Sea/North Africa Littorals (US European Command and USAFRICOM).

Marines will be consistently deployed in the littoral areas of these regions and deliberately engaged per the campaign plans of the respective combatant commanders. First, this includes the routine, rotational deployment of Marine expeditionary units (MEUs) to traditional Pacific, Indian, Arabian, and Mediterranean waters in the role of theater "first responders." Second, it compels the routine, rotational deployment of special purpose MAGTFs

(SPMAGTFs) employed in missions such as training and advising, stability, humanitarian support, and other theater security cooperation activities. Lastly, it requires an advisory group capacity within each Marine expeditionary force (MEF).

We will look for opportunities to increase the number of Marines assigned to government and military assistance organizations, including country teams. At the conclusion of these tours, we will assign them to follow-on duties that apply their experience to regionally-focused operating, advisory, and security forces. We will institutionalize training and advisory duties as legitimate, normal career activities for all Marines, and ensure promotion policies reflect appropriate consideration of these duties.

4. Posture for Hybrid Threats in Complex Environments. Without sacrificing its conventional capabilities, the Corps will prepare to conduct operations against hybrid threats in complex environments; such as urbanized littorals, mountainous terrain, and dense jungles. We must successfully identify, engage, and operate against ever

evolving opponents who will exploit irregular approaches with modern lethal capabilities and advanced cybertechnology. Robust intelligence capabilities will support all levels of command awareness and decisionmaking. Advancements in secure communications will extend the commander's operational reach and enhance force protection. Our approach to problem solving and organization, our maneuver warfare philosophy, and our combined arms skills will continue to serve us well in these chaotic environments.

5. Reinforce Naval Relationships. We share with the Navy a remarkable heritage and a common perspective on the fundamental necessity of maintaining the ability to operate freely in the littorals. This underwrites our ability to maintain access to foreign markets, provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, conduct theater security cooperation, and protect our national interests. To maintain this ability, we need the capability to conduct robust forcible entry operations from the sea, maritime interception operations (MIO), and other naval expeditionary force tasks. This operational capability requires the constant maintenance of relationships and skills developed through years of side-by-side service with the fleet. The demands of the past few years have reduced those side-by-side service opportunities. The Corps will place renewed emphasis on such training and deployments in order to reinvigorate that capability.

6. Ensure Amphibious Force Levels Meet Strategic Requirements. We are resolved to maintain the requisite capacity of modern amphibious lift to support the Nation's ability to execute forcible entry operations from the sea and other combatant commander missions.

The Nation's amphibious lift requirement has two primary drivers. The first is the capacity to support joint forcible entry operations. This is a MEF-level requirement, defined as the total shipping needed to lift a MEF command element and the assault echelon of two Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB) equivalents, reinforced by a third MEB equivalent through the use of the maritime prepositioning force (future) (MPF[F]). The ability to overcome challenges to access and to project power ashore is a basis of our combat credibility and conventional deterrent.

The second driver is the combatant commander's needs for theater security cooperation, presence, and crisis response forces. Since the end of the Cold War, the frequency of these missions and other amphibious operations has doubled due to increased requirements for crisis response and flexible, persistent presence options for theater security initiatives.

Given a need to balance a forcible entry capability and increased sea based persistent presence, the minimum force of operationally available amphibious ships must be continuously assessed. This assessment will be conducted

in conjunction with the Navy. We will evaluate the number and composition of ships required to maintain an effective sea-based MEF-level warfighting capability as well as other sea-based forward presence requirements.

7. Create Joint Seabasing Capabilities. We will improve our ability to cross wide expanses of ocean and remain persistently offshore at the place and time of our choosing. Joint force commanders depend upon the sea as both maneuver space and as a secure base of operations to overcome antiaccess capabilities. Our approach to both challenges is called seabasing. Seabasing provides an initial port and airfield afloat in the area of operations that minimizes the reliance on ports and airfields ashore. Though the sea base must be protected, it is the ideal method for projecting influence and power ashore in either a discrete or overt manner. This can be done in support of security cooperation activities, humanitarian assistance, adversary deterrence, or while executing major combat operations.

8. Lead Joint/Multinational. Operations and Enable Interagency Activities. A clearly changing characteristic in the modern battlespace is the shift from a primarily military focus to one that achieves a greater degree of operational integration of all instruments of national power. Accordingly, we will extend our combined arms approach and add a "combined actions" orientation. We will better integrate interagency capabilities into our training, education, campaign planning, and operations while also improving our own capabilities to lead joint task forces. We will offer training and educational venues to joint, multinational, and interagency personnel. This will assist our preparation for contingencies and build the relationships needed when the Nation calls on the Corps to lead or enable a joint, multinational, or interagency effort.

9. Maintain a Ready and Sustainable Reserve. We will employ a total force approach to meet the Marine Corps' force generation requirements. The Marine Corps will pursue policies and operational practices to better develop and access the skill, knowledge, and expertise of Marines in the Reserve Component. This approach will provide the most effective warfighting solution for the Marine Corps' total force manpower requirements. The Marine Corps will optimize the use of its Reserve Component as an operational as well as a strategic force provider.

10. Build and Deploy Multicapable MAGTFs. Our MAGTFs will be decisive across the range of military operations with their capacity tailored to combatant commanders' requirements. They will be optimized to operate as an integrated system through the air, land, and maritime domains, and the information

environment. In order to reduce strategic and operational risks and provide our Nation's leadership with the capabilities and right capacity to execute the missions we are assigned, we must be properly sized. Operational experience confirms Congress' decision to define the composition of the Corps as a combined arms team with a specified structure. We will man, train, and sustain three balanced and modernized MEFs in the Active Component.

Conclusion

This vision and supporting strategy establish a direction of advance and specific objectives for our institution. This effort is founded on our Congressionally-mandated functions, exploits our legacy and ethos as Marines, and responds to anticipated future challenges. As we prepare for 2025 and beyond, the Marine Corps must pay heed to combat-proven truths that have served the Nation well both in times of peril and in times of peace. It must also continue to refine its capabilities for a challenging future.

In a world of dynamic change, some constants remain. The superior performance of the Marine Corps, in every environment, is one of those constants. Our creative and innovative mindset ensures that we are agile — adept at anticipating and preparing for events in an increasingly dangerous world. This agility is another constant. Whether in the littorals, where we are most comfortable, or in the mountains of a land-locked nation — Marines will adapt and prevail. We are, and will remain, prepared to fight and win when and where our Nation calls.

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Marine Corps vision &
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